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AUSTRALIAN COUNCIL FOR OVERSEAS AID

(INCORPORATED IN THE ACT)

ACFOA HUMAN RIGHTS OFFICE
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22 April 1990

Dear friend

I trust this package of recent material on East Timor reaches you safely and will be of some use in your work, though I fully appreciate at least some of the material in it will already be known to you.

I would like to take this opportunity to advise of several other items that have come to my attention.

1. UN Decolonisation Committee Seminar

This will be held in Vanuatu, 9-11 May. The seminar will focus on self-determination, both political and economic, and the environmental issues facing small island peoples. The Committee is chaired by Robert van Lierop, Vanuatu's representative at the UN, who is very sympathetic to East Timor.

NGOs are welcome, indeed encouraged to attend and address the seminar. Jose Ramos Horta, I believe, will be attending.

As it is important that East Timor be referred to and emphasised by a broad range of speakers, attempts are being made to identify South Pacific organisations who will be represented at the seminar and who can be requested to speak strongly on Timor.

Other ideas being explored are the possibility of a PET representative speaking and someone to address the Timor Gap Treaty which is clearly a breach of self-determination.

2. Carmel Budiardjo visit

Carmel, the director of Tapol, the Indonesia Human Rights Campaign in the UK, will visit Melbourne to speak at the ASPAC 90 conference 4-8 July. She would like to take advantage of the visit, a rare opportunity, to catch up with everyone and particularly to visit Melbourne, Sydney, Cairns, Darwin (on the one ticket) and at least Canberra on a side ticket.

She would also like to raise some money on the visit to pay for her expensive London-Australia return airfare. So any paying lectures, collections etc. that can be organised would be appreciated.

Her plan is to travel within Australia in June, ie. before her ASPAC commitment in early July. Please let me know asap if you are

interested in having Carmel in your city and any details on program.

3. ABC radio report

Following the excellent ABC Radio National background briefing on East Timor which was broadcast on 15/4, Radio National will broadcast a follow up on the Church in East Timor on its Insight Program this Sunday, 29/4.

It will be presented by Paul Collins and will use interview material (with Peter Philp and Bishop Paul Moore) not included in the 15/4 program.

Copies of the Background Briefing program can be obtained from Mark Aarons on 02/339 2634, if you ask nicely.

4. Timor Gap Treaty

The new Minister for Resources and Energy is Alan Griffiths. His office has definitely confirmed that two bills in respect of the Timor Gap Treaty will go before the next session of Parliament. This session commences on May 8 and, for the House, will run for 2 weeks and, for the Senate, for 3 weeks.

The Government does not expect any substantive challenge from the Opposition and is confident the bills will pass both chambers and be 'law' by the end of May.

Though one has to acknowledge that the bills will not be blocked in Parliament, it is important that the true character of what is being done be exposed and that opposition be registered by both the community and individual parliamentarians. This should be done for moral and legal reasons but also as a way of sending a strong signal to Portugal that the issue is of concern in Australia and they will have strong support from sections of the Parliament and community should they proceed with plans to challenge the legality of the Treaty before the World Court, either directly,or indirectly through the UN.

A number of initiatives are already underway. Such as a positive move to run an ad in the national press, Sasha Stepan's recent visit to Portugal and the UK on the issue, the publication of a solid article on the subject in the latest issue of Inside Indonesia, which circulates widely amongst Indonesia watchers.

Additional measures will be useful, of course. Particularly the lobbying and briefing of the Democrats and sympathetic Labour, Liberal and Independent MPs. Though PET is somewhat 'headless' at the moment, thanks to the unenlightened voters of Deakin who knocked off Tony Lamb, it is to be hoped that PET (Australia) might also take action.

In regard the attached memo may be of some use.

With every best wish

Yours sincerely

Pat Walsh